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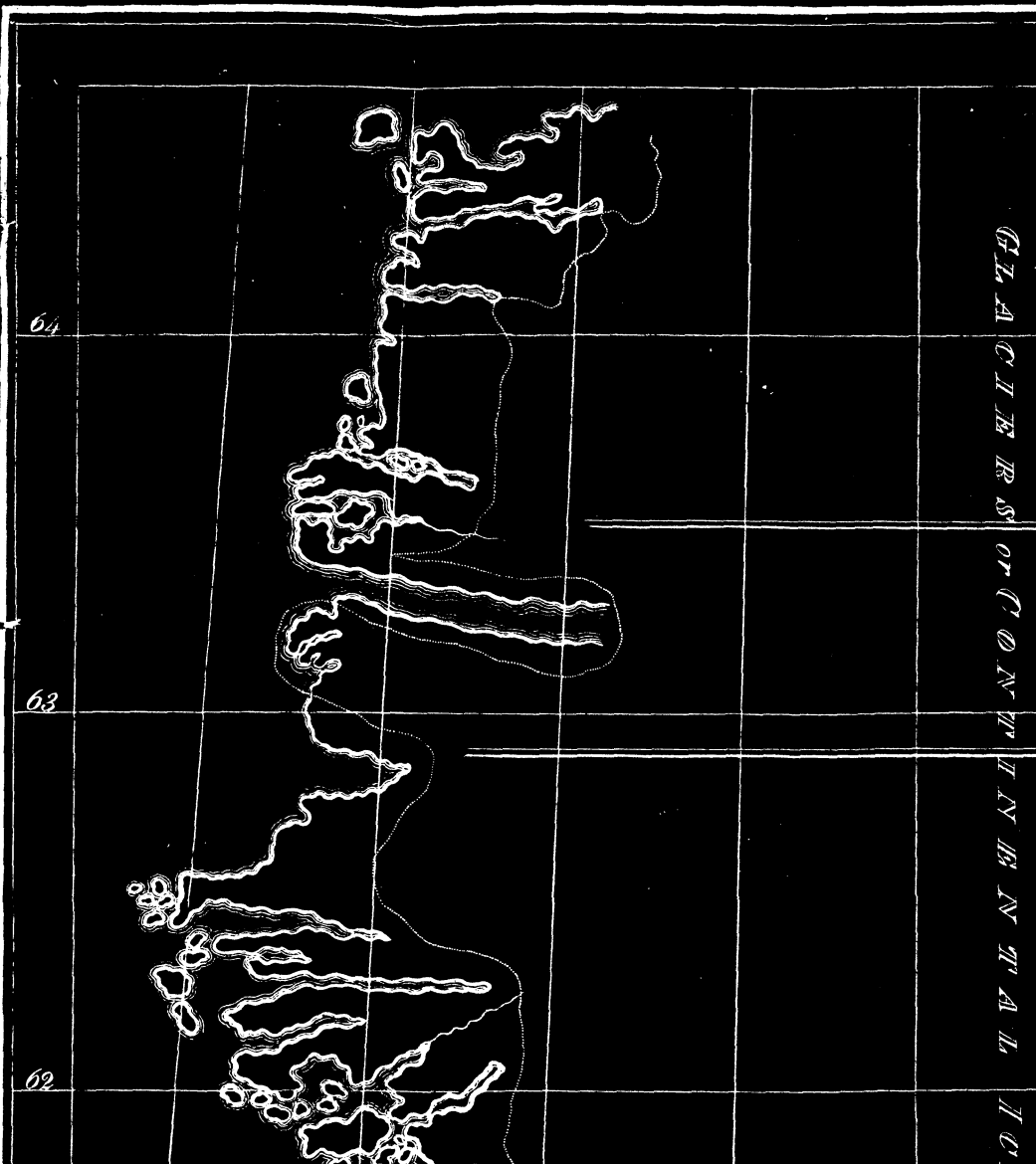
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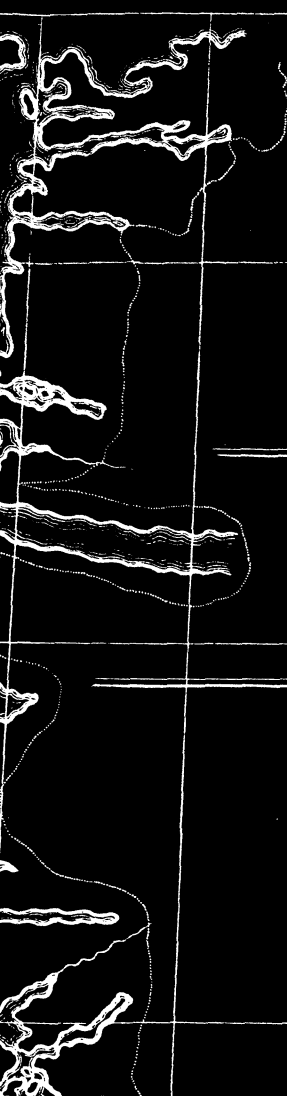
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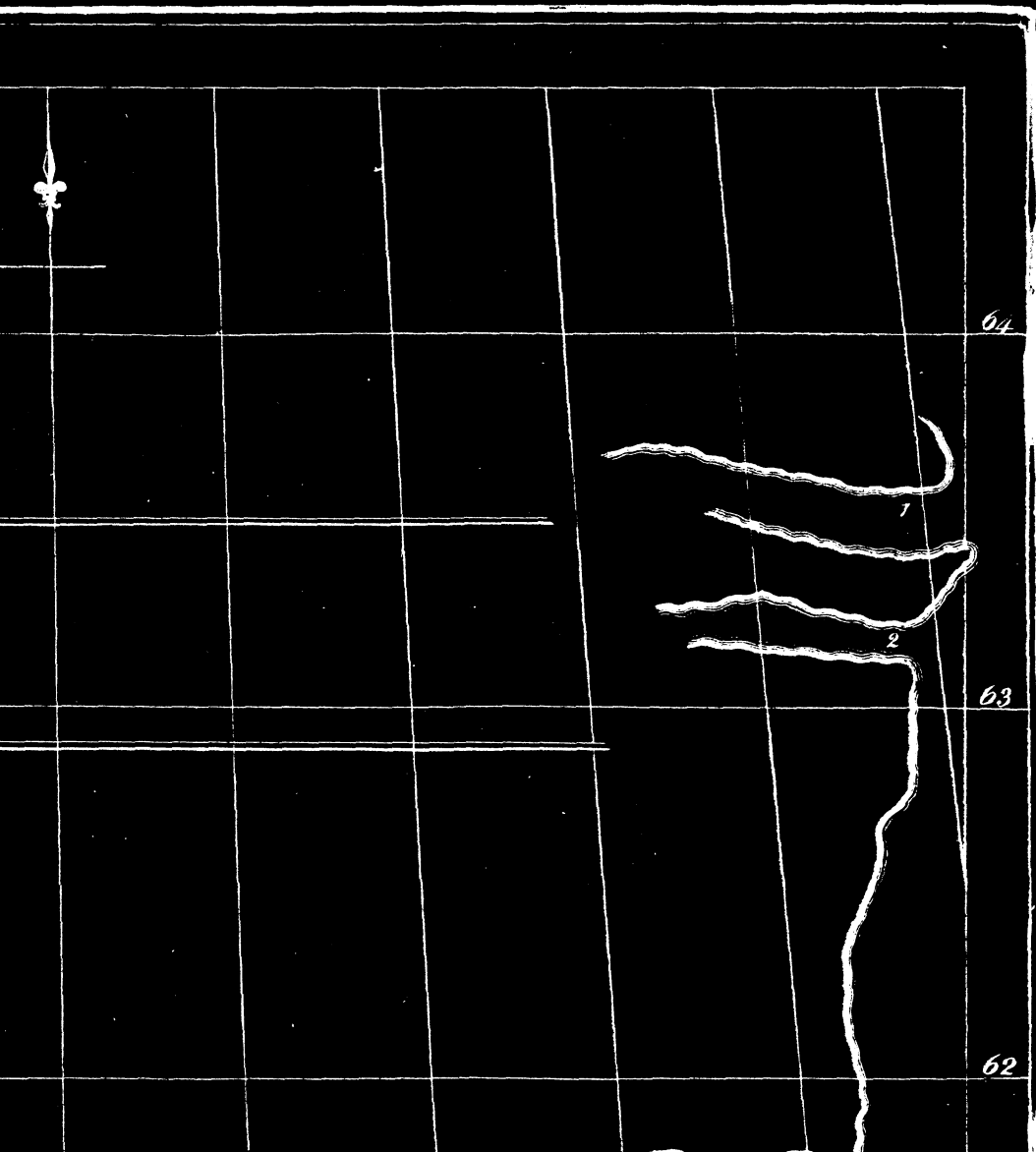
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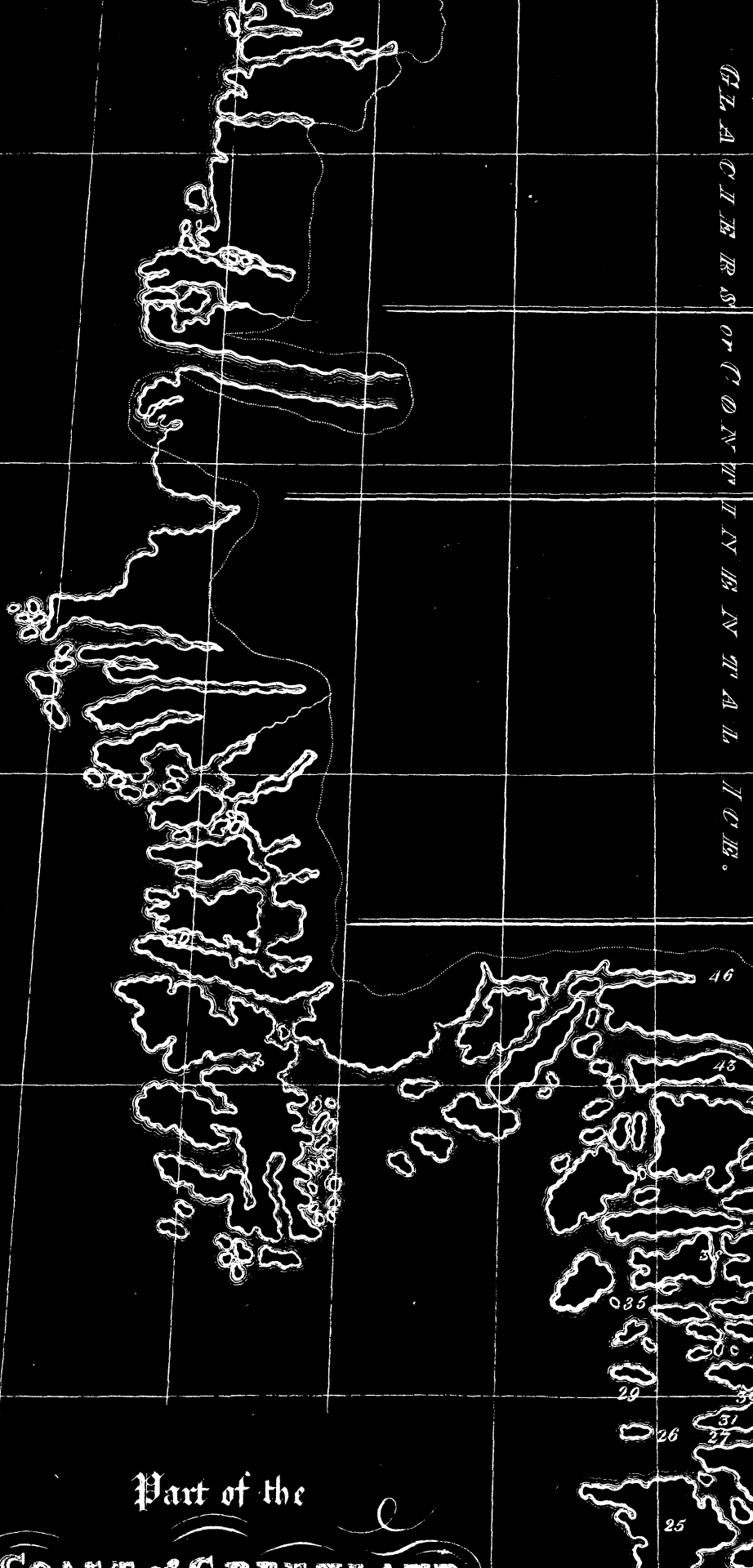
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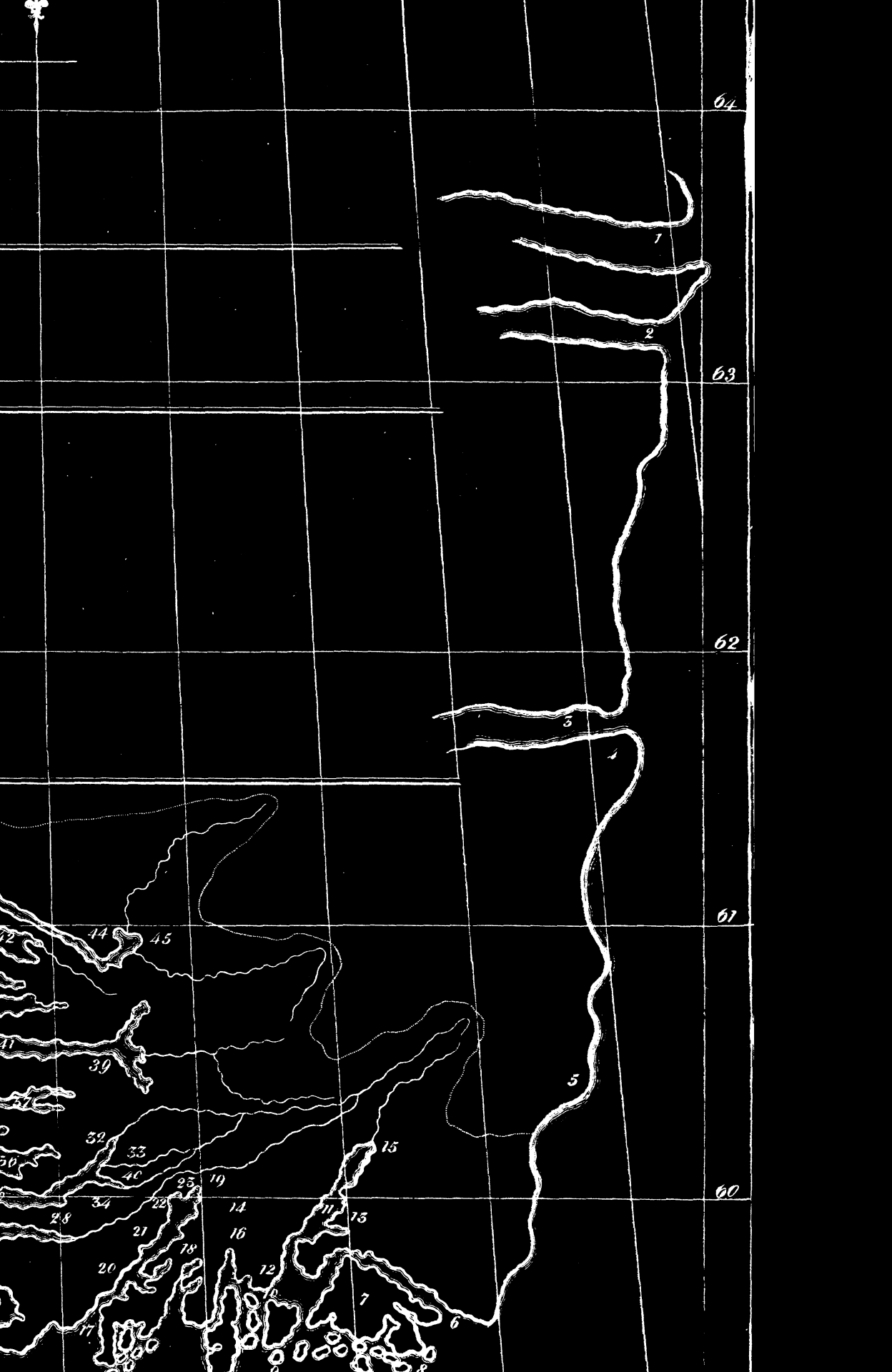
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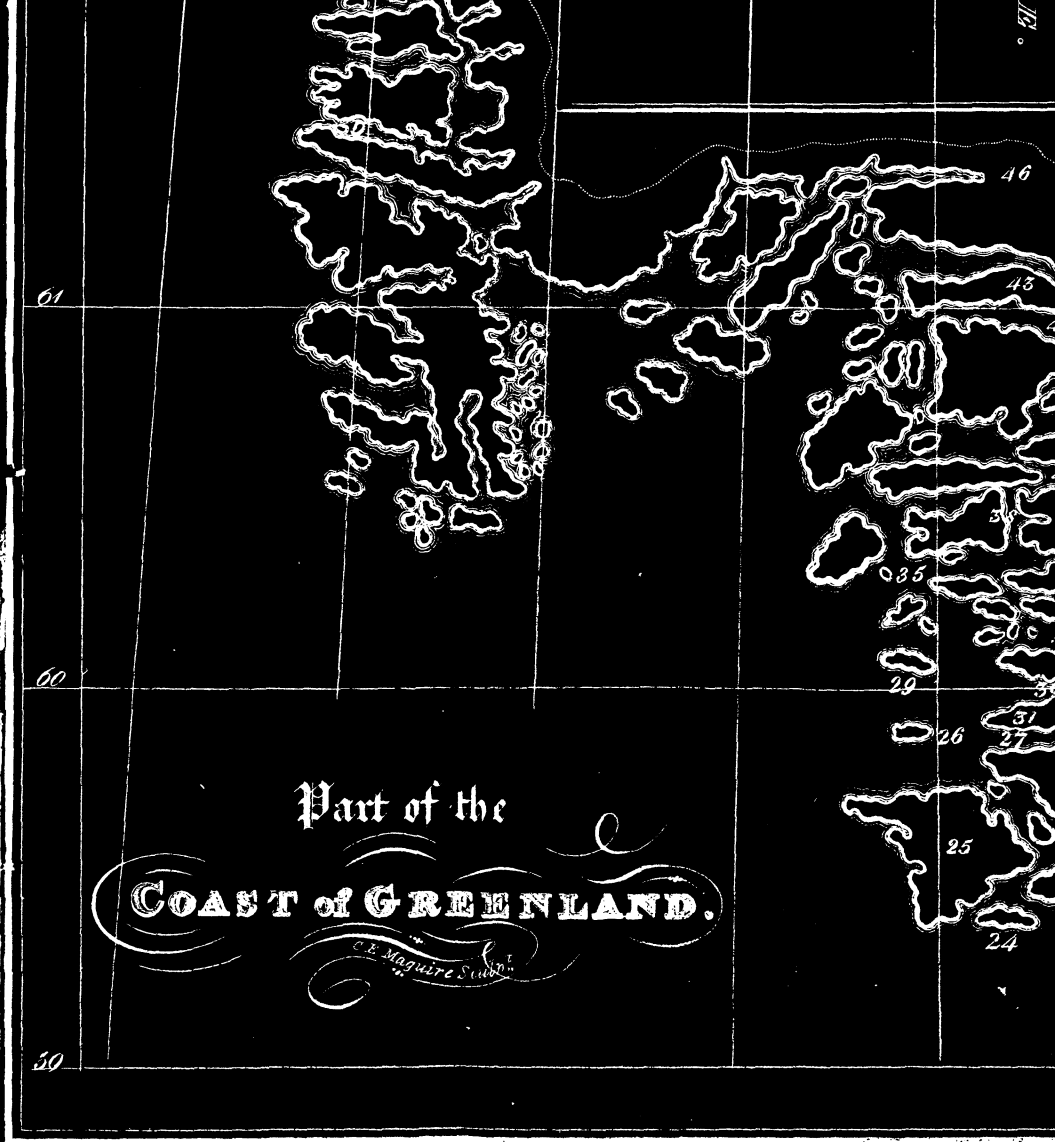


GLACIERS OF GREENLAND.



the
GREENLAND.



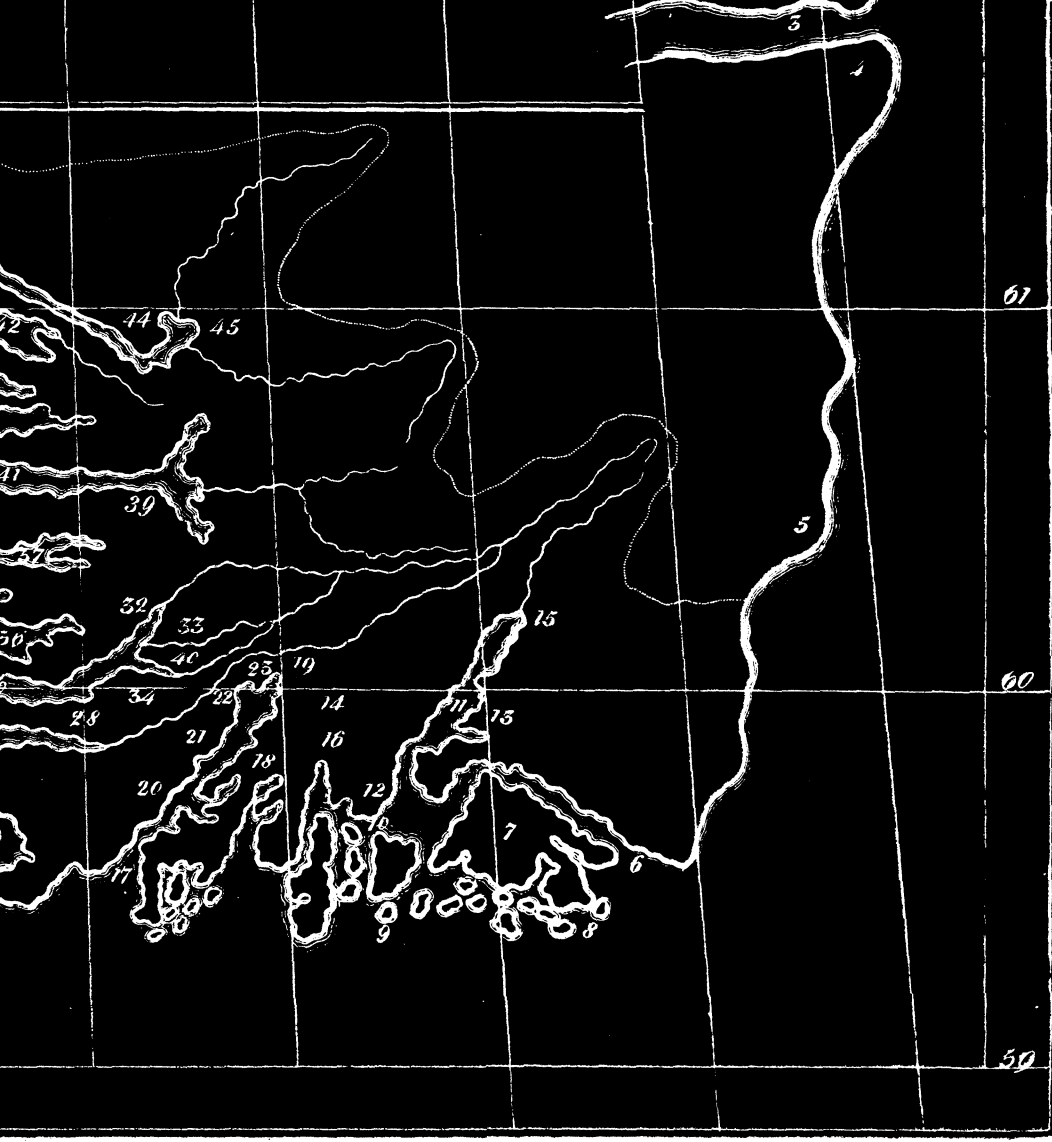


Part of the

COAST of GREENLAND.

C. E. Maguire Survey.





*On the Norwegian Settlements on the Eastern Coast of Greenland,
or Osterbygd, and their Situation. By Sir Charles Lewis
Gièsecke.*

Read January 26, 1824.

ALTHOUGH the North of our globe is certainly not a region likely to be chosen voluntarily and without compulsion for a habitation, yet history informs us, that these countries were inhabited even at an early period. It might, however, happen, that want of subsistence, dissensions with countrymen, or a spirit of chivalry and piracy, would compel families and whole tribes to leave their native country and to remove farther to the north. This was particularly the case with some northern nations, formerly comprised under the name of Normans, who harassed all countries by their depredations. In this way, in the year 982, on occasion of the banishment of an offender, a new country was discovered. Thorwaldsen, a Norwegian Jarl or Earl, was obliged to fly on account of a murder he had committed, and accordingly went to Iceland, where he settled a considerable part of the Island with a new colony. His son, Eric Raude, or Eric the Red having been persecuted by Egolf Taur on account of murder, his revengeful spirit at last prompted him to kill Egolf likewise. This and other misdemeanors he had been guilty of compelled him to quit Iceland. He knew that a man of the name of Gunbiörn had discovered the rocky islands, called by him Gunbiorn's Skjar, on the western side of Iceland; but likewise still more to the westward a country of

great extent. Being condemned to banishment for three years he determined upon making a voyage of discovery to this country. Soon after he had set sail he saw the point of land called Herjolfsnees; and, after sailing a little more to the south-west, he entered a large inlet, which he called Eric's Fiord, or Eric's Sound, and passed the winter on a pleasant island in the vicinity of it, to which he gave the name of Eric's Ey. In the following year he examined part of the continent of this vast country; and, in the third year, he returned to Iceland, where, with a view that a considerable number of people might be induced to follow him to the new discovered country, which he called Greenland, he made an exaggerated description of its fertility. Accordingly there set out for this place twenty five vessels, with people and cattle for breeding, of which vessels fourteen only arrived safe. These first colonists were soon followed by more, as well from Norway as Iceland; and, in the space of a few years, their number increased so much, that they formed themselves in two bygds, or settlements, on part of the eastern and of the western coast, called Osterbygd and Westerbygd: they increased so much, that they were divided into parishes, and subjected to a bishop. Some of the Danish Chronicles are rather too prolix in their enumeration of parishes, churches, monasteries and villages, particularly as villages are not common either in Iceland or in the western parts of Norway.

This account of the first settlements on the coast of Greenland rests on the authority of Snore Sturleson, a celebrated Icelandic judge and historiographer, who wrote his account in the year 1215. Other Danish chronicles place the discovery and population of Greenland in the year 800.

The Christian religion, which was first embraced by Eric the Red and his son Leif, made extraordinary progress, and was dif-

fused in the course of a century all over the settlements. There were on the eastern coast alone twelve parishes and two monasteries. Arngrim Jonas gives an account of seventeen bishops down to the year 1412. A short time previous to this period, the Esquimaux (Greenlanders) began to shew themselves on the west coast of Greenland. It is very difficult to say with certainty from what country they came. I am quite convinced that they came from the west coast of Davis's Strait, around Baffin's Bay, as the people in Terra Labrador are of the same nation: a nation, which is undoubtedly very extensive, which inhabits Nootka Sound, William's Sound, and probably emigrated from these distant residences by land, over the Copper-mine-river, and the lakes down to Hudson's Bay. Every one who reads Cook's and Clarke's account of these people with attention will be surprised by the resemblance of these two distant families, as to their language and manner of living.

The time of the extirpation of the Icelanders on the coast of Greenland is very uncertain, and there are very different opinions on this subject. I shall quote them briefly, and then submit my own opinion.

Some attribute it to warlike attacks or battles between the Esquimaux and Norwegians. I think it is quite ridiculous and absurd to suppose, that these timid, feeble, wretched creatures, who could not arrive in masses on the spot, who neither use nor know instruments of war, should attack and defeat a robust, valiant, brave set of men known through ages as heroes.

Another opinion is, that the European settlers were exterminated by a kind of plague called the black death, which made dreadful devastations in the north of Europe in the year 1350. But, at that time, all intercourse had already ceased between the settlements and

their mother country. How came the black death to Greenland? And would not the Greenlanders have been more exposed to such a disease on account of their uncleanness? Another opinion is, that they perished of famine by the sudden setting in of the polar ice, which covers the sea from time to time, and which cut off their connection with their native country. Is it forgotten, that the settlers subsisted from their cattle, and from their inland salmon fisheries?

I may now be permitted to deliver my own opinion in a few words. All the houses of the Norwegians were built differently, and on different places from those of the Esquimaux. The Norwegians lived in Fiords, and mostly at their ends; they looked for grass, fresh water, and shelter for their cattle, and for salmon-fishery: the Esquimaux live from the spoils of the sea, and place their houses as near to the rocky shores as possible.

All the ruins of Norwegian houses, and there were more than fifty which I examined, were surrounded by immense masses of rocks, probably precipitated from the summits of the adjacent mountains, and heaped together in the most fantastic groups, the places of fracture being sometimes so fresh, that the points from which they are broken are distinctly observable. Places of desolation of this kind are frequently met with in the mountains, connected with the sea by waterfalls, which are precipitated, with tremendous noise and destructive velocity headlong from the rocks, covered with glaciers. I have no doubt but that such a revolution, caused by bursting glaciers and following inundations, has effected this dreadful chaos; and that perhaps the Norwegian settlers perished, and were buried with their cattle in the ruins. All that I found near the ruins of their churches were scattered fragments of bells. It is singular enough that I could not find any trace of Runic stones, which must have existed in the vicinity of their churches and monas-

teries. The individuals, who escaped this destruction, have mixed with the natives. I could easily recognize and distinguish the European (Caucasian) countenances from the Mongolic, although there have elapsed more than three centuries since their extermination. This difference of countenance is not visible amongst the natives on the western coast, except in those parts of the Danish settlements where Europeans intermarry, or where the natives come in connexion with European vessels for the purpose of trade or whale fishery. It appears further, from different Scandinavian or Icelandic words adopted in the language of the Greenlanders, words used in domestic life, that there existed a friendly intercourse between both nations. Such are Gwanneck, (*Angelica Archangelica*,) the Gwanne of the Icelanders and Norwegians, a favourite vegetable, eaten raw and boiled by both nations. Such is Nisa and Nisarnak, two species of dolphins, called Nisen by the Scandinavians. Such is Kona, Wife, Kona of the Norwegians, and different other words. But the most striking appeared to me to be the words Tornak and Tornarsuk. Thornak or Torngak signifies in their language soul, and spirit, or demon; and Thornarsuk or Torngarsuk, a being similar to a spirit. A spirit-like being, called by the Greenlanders Thornarsuk, is the only supreme being acknowledged by them, without being worshipped. Now it is evident to me, that the word Thornarsuk is to be derived from Thor, the god of Thunder of the northern nations, to which they have added their suffix ak and arsuk. They attribute to this being the same propensities attributed to it by the old Scandinavians, namely, to excite thunder, to effect other phenomena in nature, and to reside in clifts of rocks. I conclude from this, that the Greenlanders were in intimate connection with the old Icelanders, that they adopted some of their religious principles, prior to the introduction of Christianity; and

that the rest of the Icelanders, which escaped the extermination of their countrymen, united themselves with the Greenlanders.

It remains now to point out the situation and the extent of the settlements which existed on the eastern coast, on the authority and nomenclature of the Icelandic historian, Ivar Bardsen, compared with the names given by the Esquimaux. From this it will appear, that the old settlements by no means extended to so high a degree of latitude, as it is generally believed. The difference in some names used by Ivar Bardsen and Biorn Johnsen arises probably from the different periods in which they lived, and from the change of the places of settlements.

According to oral communications, received by such of the natives as live in 65 or 66 degrees of latitude, the soil is so barren and dry, that, a few spots excepted, it does not afford so much straw as they want to put in their boots. This is also confirmed by Captain Scoresby in his Journal, vide p. 177.

The following are the names of the old Norwegian settlements compared with the Greenlandic places on the eastern and southern coasts, where ruins of Icelandic buildings and cultivation of the soil are still to be found.—*See the Map.*

BIORN JOHNSEN'S AND
IVAR BARDSEN'S
NORWEGIAN NAMES.

1. Ollum-lengri.
2. Bergefiord.
3. Skagafiord, Heriolffiord.

NAMES USED BY THE
GREENLANDERS.

No settlement.
Puisortok.
Kangerluksoeitsiak, ruins on
its northern side.

NORWEGIAN NAMES.

4. Heriøls-næs.
5. Hvarf.
6. Spalsund.
7. Drangei.
8. Haf hvarf.
9. Hellisey.
10. Helliseyarfiordr.
11. Ketilsfiord.
12. Aros-Kirke.
13. Peters-viig Church, (Kirke.)
14. Watns-dal.
15. St. Olufs Kloster, (Augustine order.)
16. Rafns-fiord, with Vøgekirke, (of the order of St. Benedict.)
17. Einarsfiord.
18. Hofgards-kirke.
19. Stor Fiskesøe.
20. Thorvalds-viig.
21. Klineng.
22. Graaevig.
23. Dom-kirken i Botnen.
24. Reens-ey.

GREENLANDIC NAMES.

Southern side of Kangerdluk-soeifriak with ruins.
 Cape Diskord and Alluk.
 Ikareseksoak, sound between Statenhuk Islands, and the Continent of Greenland 60°.
 Statenhuk's Island.
 Kangek-kyadlek.
 Omenak.
 Tunnua, Sound near Omenak.
 Illua.
 In the firth Illua.
 Ruins in Kaksitsiak.
 In the firth Tessermiut.
 On the Northern side of the firth Tessermiut.
 Narksamiut.

 Tessermiut.
 In the firth Tessermiut.
 Tessersoak, near Koorsoak.
 Tessiursarsuk, four miles to the south-west from Nougarsuk.
 Nougarsuk.
 Akpaitevik.
 Tessermint-Kingoa.
 Nenortelik.

NORWEGIAN NAMES.	GREENLANDIC NAMES.
25. Lang-ey.	Sermesok, or Cape Farewell.
26. Kam-stade Fiord.	Kunnermint, to the south of Ounartok.
27. Hvals-eyar-fiord.	Ounartok.
28. Thiodhildar-stadar.	Narksarsoak.
29. Erics-ey.	Tuktuktuarsuk.
30. Erics-fiord.	Agluitsok.
31. Dyrnees Kirkesogn.	Kangerdluluk.
32. Mid-fiord	Kallumiut.
33. Buurfield.	Akulliaraseksoak.
34. Brattahlid.	Sioralik.
35. Fossasund.	Ikaresarsuk.
36. Yttreviig.	Sergvartursok.
37. Lambeyar.	Omenartout, Ikermiut, Omenar- suk, and other islands.
38. Lambeyar-sund.	Karsok.
39. Breede-fiord.	Igalikko.
40. Leidar-kirke.	Itiblik, in Igalikko.
41. Mioefiord.	Kakortok.
42. Eyrar-fiord.	Kangerdluarsuk.
43. Borgar-fiord.	Turnuliarbik.
44. Lodmundar-fiord.	Kingoa ; in Tunnuliarbik.
45. Gardanes.	Valley in Kindgoa.
46. Isafiord.	Sermelik.

Where the Osterbygd terminates.

The Firths Tessermiut and Tunnugliarbik appear to have been better inhabited than any of the others, on account of the fertility

of their soil, and the abundance of fish: the ruins of their houses bear testimony to the wealth and comfort of their former inhabitants, in comparison with the remains of other buildings in other Firths. You will find here a very luxuriant vegetation, with several plants foreign to this part of the arctic regions, and probably imported and cultivated by the former settlers; for instance, the *Sorbus Aucuparia*, different species of the *Potentilla*, of *Carex*, the *Pinguicula Vulgaris*, &c. all plants which only are found in the neighbourhood of former Norwegian settlements. *Pinguicula* is used in different parts of the north of Europe, particularly in Norway, Iceland, and Lapland, to prevent the curdling of milk. Both Firths abound in shrubs, particularly in species of *Salix*, *Betula*, and *Juniperus*. Most of the fragments of bells were found in the neighbourhood of the churches of these two Firths; and the ruins of the buildings brave the destroying power of time and climate.

I have followed in this essay such authorities only as appeared to me authentic, supported by my own experience with respect to the undoubted Icelandic ruins, which I found on the coast, and which differ widely from the remnants of old Greenlandic houses, as to their form, structure, and durability. There is no want of historical accounts written by Icelandic and Danish authors, with respect to the old settlements; but these accounts are so contradictory, that it is quite impossible to reconcile them. Thormodus Torfæus, late historiographer to the King of Denmark, published in his *Greenlandia Antiqua* (Havniæ, 1706, 8vo.) four different maps, or *Delinationes Gronlandiæ*, which differ from each other as materially as if maps of different countries. The earliest, of 1570, is of Sigurdus Stephanus; the second, of 1606, is from Gudbrandus Torlacius, an Icelandic bishop; the third is from another Icelandic, Jonas Gudmundus; the fourth, of 1668, from Theodorus Torlacius. To these,

the author (Thormodus Torfæus) adds his own ; but he confesses fairly, that he does not think it to be a correct or a satisfactory one. Be this as it may, his work is the best critical historical account that ever was published on East Greenland. The uncertainty and darkness, in which the earlier history of Greenland is enveloped, may be accounted for, from the circumstance that nobody was formerly allowed to sail thither without a pass, under forfeiture of his life. The eagerness of sailing to Greenland was occasioned by a report, that there was a great abundance of gold and silver, and many precious stones, and that in former ages some ships brought great treasures from thence ; but the loss of many vessels, which sailed thither under the orders and at the cost of Queen Margaret of Denmark, discouraged her from venturing other attempts ; and the queen, being afterwards engaged in a war with Sweden, had more weighty affairs upon her hands than to trouble herself much about Greenland, which at last proved the occasion of the total loss of that country.